

The Federal Diary By Mike Causey

Carter Headache: Parking Space Flap

President Carter, the nation's best-known supervisor, is learning some interesting things about the sensitivity of the Washington portion of his far-flung federal bureaucracy. Things he has learned:

- He can cut their pay raises and survive.
- He can call bureaucrats names without risking impeachment.
- He can take the "E" out of HEW.
- He can question their pension program.
- He can reorganize them dizzy.
- But he runs into trouble when he starts messing with their parking spaces.

Beginning Nov. 1, presidentially-ordered free federal parking ends here and in other government centers, from Alaska to Key West. And the people here—20,000 drivers and many more federal riders—are flipping out.

Petitions protesting paid parking, some with several thousand signatures, have been sent to newspapers, radio-TV stations and the White House. Lawsuits testing the legality of charging federal workers to park on federal property are being drafted. Charity boycotts have been organized to protest the new rates that will start off between \$10 and \$45 per month and then, in two years, reach regular commercial fees.

Even the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, an Annapolis colleague of the president, felt compelled to ask for an exemption from paid parking for his people, on grounds that the CIA is remote and hard to reach by bus. He got the exemption, but most other freebie parking will end Nov. 1.

The emotion (and reasoning) behind the parking protest has surprised many, and infuriated some. It has angered federal workers who say it is another anti-bureaucrat blast from the White House, a move that will doom some car pools and cut into the pocketbooks of lower-paid civil servants.

The nonfederal sector of this federal city is equally up in arms. People say they pay anywhere from \$30 to \$90 per month for the dubious honor of handing over their cars to parking lot attendants whose judgment, and depth-perception, often leave much to be desired. So welcome to the real world, say the pro-paid parking people.

Whichever side of the fence you may be on, it is safe to say the parking flap has generated more noise, heat and anger than anything Carter has done to, or for, the bureaucracy, since he walked up Pennsylvania avenue from the Capitol swearing in.

There were protests here, to be sure, when Carter set a 5.5 percent limit (later raised to 7 percent) on federal pay raises. But that was nothing to compare to the parking uproar.

Boycotts of the Combined Federal Campaign have been organized at HEW, Navy (the town's two biggest employers) and other federal agencies. Most of the uproar is coming from workers in suburban areas where transportation by car often is a must, and local commercial parking is non-existent.

Friday the protest will come to the White House. By chartered bus, by federal workers taking a half day of vacation. Two groups—both from suburban Maryland—have been issued picketing permits by the U.S. Park Police. They plan to bring 700 people to picket the president over paid parking.

The Free Parking Underground at one local Navy installation hopes to organize a road-jammer Nov. 1. It is encouraging all drivers to show up with a \$20 bill to pay their new 65-cents-per-day-rate.

Government drivers and car pool members say the paid parking is unfair in a city where public transportation leaves much to be desired. They claim it will wreck car pools (especially as agencies experiment with varying hours shifts). And they predict that residential areas will be overrun with people who drive part-way and take the bus, or simply to avoid paying for parking. Many claim that expensive, new bureaucracies already are springing up in government to handle parking fees, assign and stickers.

Central Intelligence Agency says it did not—as reported here yesterday—get exempted from paid parking because of its suburban (Langley, Va.) location. CIA did get exempted. But that was because comparable commercial rates in McLean were below the President's minimum guidelines for parking charges. CIA workers in Arlington and elsewhere will pay for parking.